



Of Interest to Maid and Matron

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SEWING CIRCLES IN DEPARTMENT STORES

"VILLAGE sewing circles," said the man who believes that things really change a great deal, "are a thing of the past. There are no such things nowadays."

Then the other man who knows that women's interest in handwork remains the same as in the days of long ago, led his doubting friend to a very large village, indeed, the village of New York, and down its most notable street, called Broadway, into one of the largest stores, buzzing with life and crowded with eager shoppers. They mounted in the elevator to the art needlework department, and there in a quiet corner they beheld the village sewing society of to-day—a group of young women, girls, matrons, older women, all earnestly at work in a quiet corner, while to one side drifted the unending procession of shoppers, cash girls, saleswomen, floor walkers, all the different groups of those who make up the personnel of a large department store.

"You see," explained the conductor of the excursion, "women are quite as fond of needlework and knitting as they ever were, only now they come to the department stores to hold their sewing circles."

All of the women in this particular group were learning how to do embroidery on flannel. Each woman, still wearing her outer wraps, sat in a comfortable chair, her embroidery frame in her hand, and followed the instructions of the teacher, a young woman employed by the store for the sole purpose of teaching all who want to learn the new stitches in needlework of various sorts. Two young girls with their mother, two older women, a young woman with a baby which slept peacefully in her lap in the shadow of the embroidery frame, and a tall, good natured matron who had journeyed in from a farm composed the group.

"There now," confessed the matron, who

had decided in favor of a new style of French knot embroidery instead of the flannel net, "I believe I've forgotten how to do French knots—I haven't done them for so many years."

One of the young girls smiled across at her and made an explanatory motion calculated to unravel French knot intricacies, then the teacher came to her rescue also and the French knot disciple went happily on with her task. One of the young girls who was with her mother worked steadily away on her flannel piece with as much absorption in her work that an older woman who sat next to her became interested.

"You're in earnest about it, aren't you?" she queried. The girl blushed and her mother exchanged glances with the questioner. Then she hesitated. But the other woman looked so interested that she couldn't help confiding in her.

"It's a wedding set," she whispered.

Although the whisper was low enough to escape the other women of the circle, the suggestion wasn't. Everybody looked toward the girl who was working so busily. Everybody smiled a little gently in that way that women do when wedding dresses are mentioned. The teacher also went forward solicitously and gave some added instruction to the earnest girl worker.

Then they passed on to the next group. Here a woman was giving instruction in knitting. A red sweater was under way and the teacher sat in the middle of a group of women all of whom had woolen things in the course of being knitted. There were beautiful white Angora baby caps, long, bright colored golf stockings, afghans for perambulators, woolen gloves and mittens—yes, mittens—nice old fashioned red ones for a little grandchild.

"My mother knit them for me," declared the proud grandmother who was at work upon them, "and I want to knit them for my grandchildren. None of

my friends know how to knit mittens—it's a lost art, they say—and so I came here to learn."

Then there's cross stitch cross stitch mingled with the French knots that are made of very thick floss, which takes very little work to count a great deal. Beautiful things are being made of travelling with the cross stitch, French knot and Kensington stitch. Pillows, bureau

"Exactly," explained a floor walker. "Lots of these women have come here to us to see what it is. Our buyers when they go to Europe are under instructions to look out for novelties in needlework or revivals of the styles of needlework that may have been popular some years ago. Then we get women who are capable of giving the instruction and the materials."

"All that we ask in exchange for the

struction. They are all competent in many branches of needlework, knitting and crocheting, and turn readily from one thing to another at the customer's wish. You may see a group of women working at Venetian crochet on some days and on others one group will include a woman doing Venetian crochet, another doing plain crochet, a third knitting with two needles and a fourth knitting with four, while an embroidery group may include women doing every known sort of embroidery, for the instructor is familiar with all.

"Not very long ago Venetian crochet was so much the fashion that practically all the women who came in wanted to do that. For a while before that every one was doing Irish crochet, but now they seem to have turned toward embroidery again, probably because with the flannel net embroidery and the new French knot embroidery so much can be accomplished in a short time in the line of Christmas present manufacture."

"And this is only one example," remarked the guide to present day sewing classes as he and his friend made their way through the alluring labyrinth of the great store to the street again. "There are many other department stores in which the same thing is going on and there are small shops also where instruction is given free if the material is bought, but others of the shops charge fair rates for tutoring needlework or lace making."

"But I seemed to miss something, after all," remarked his friend. "I haven't ever been to sewing circles myself, but I didn't expect they would be so picturesque and charming to look at as these are, and I also didn't expect that they would be so quiet."

"Ah," confessed the other man, "the village gossip, that of course one doesn't get in the department store sewing circle. The women can't gossip as they do their work because they don't know each other."

Of course that part of it isn't as perfect as it was in the good old days.

"I shouldn't wonder if that is why the women of to-day turn to clubs and suffrage," declared the other man. "They've got to have something to talk about at the sewing circles."

"But, anyhow, the sewing circles are as popular as ever. You can see that the women are still devoted to all that is feminine."

And the other man admitted that it did.



The Revolt of the Confidante.

"I'm thinking of starting a new profession," said the small young woman with the kind brown eyes. "It really would be better than school teaching, because I could stay in on rainy days and in the very cold weather, whereas now I have to toil away to the other end of the town every school day, and it isn't possible to get away from my new profession; anyhow, it just hunts me out."

"Well, you're lucky, Lucetta. If anything hunts you out," grumbled the young woman with the sad expression, "Nothing ever hunts me out; nothing, I mean, but bills."

Lucetta held up one small competent hand and her face broke into a ripple of smiles.

"Pause one moment before you go on with your point, Ermengarde," she begged, "let me tell you what my new profession is, it's this," she added, looking steadily at Ermengarde, "I'm going in for being a professional confidante. There must be money in it. There isn't anything that people like more than to tell their troubles; it's better than candy and cake to most of them. They pay for candy and cake, and so why shouldn't they pay for telling their troubles?"

Ermengarde looked at her blankly. "Who has been heaping woes on you now?" she demanded. I suppose it is Millie Ellis or Tony Richardson."

"It isn't Tony or Millie," declared Lucetta; "it's everybody. I've reckoned up the hours last winter that I spent listening to other people's troubles, and it's appalling."

She unrolled a slip of paper and began to count:

"Five hundred and eighty hours," she announced, "and that was only in the evenings; there were Sundays, too, and often times after school, so you see I'm serious about it. Something's got to be done."

"You're too good natured."

"No, it's fate. The only way for me to get even with it is to get into something where my fatal power of drawing out sad stories is of some value to somebody. Just now it isn't any good and it doesn't do the other people any good, for they never take my advice, no matter how earnestly they seek it; and telling their troubles over and over so many times simply makes them self-centered and morbid. So I've decided to be a professional confidante. I'm going to call myself an advice bureau. None want advice of course, but they want to tell their troubles and they seek advice as a way of flattering their victims, and so the advice bureau will naturally appeal to them and draw them out—and draw them in, too, I hope. I shall charge small fees for a consultation, and all consultations will be strictly confidential, not a word will ever be transmitted to any one. I think I may count upon my friends for their support, as they have always found that true of me."

"But of course you aren't in earnest!"

"Oh, yes, I am," declared her friend; "perfectly in earnest and I'm telling everybody that I know about it and asking them to help out."

Ermengarde looked at her curiously. "How many tales of woe," she demanded, "have been poured into your ears since you began to circulate the news of your bureau?"

"Not many," confessed the other girl, and she laughed teasingly at Ermengarde. "In fact," she admitted, "I think everybody's stopped using me to weep on excepting—"

"Excepting," finished Ermengarde, "and I was coming over to see you tonight to tell you about the latest chapter of 'him.' But I won't. Let's go to the theatre, instead."

And they did.

Why Colonial Furniture Is Valuable

WHY Colonial furniture is valuable is explained in a booklet issued by the College of Agriculture of Cornell University.

"No one knew better than the Colonial folk the relation between structure and form," declares the Cornell furniture experts. "It is not because Colonial furniture is old that it is valuable, but because it is sound in workmanship, normal in form and made of a kind of mahogany that is not on the market to-day. The decoration applied by the Colonial makers to their furniture, whether carving, inlay, mouldings, turnings or decorative grain, with few exceptions enhanced the effect and in no way distorted the natural shape. Cherry and birch were used for legs and for uprights requiring strength, mahogany being too brittle for this purpose. The fronts of bureau drawers, the backs of davenport and other parts showing beautiful grain were merely veneered with a thin layer of mahogany glued to a backing of soft wood."

Wood veneer should not be looked on as a sham, since it is used for the purpose of preventing large panels of wood from warping; table tops, door panels and the like would warp out of all usefulness unless they were built up to two or more layers of wood running in different directions and glued together, so that the tendency of one layer of wood to shrink in one direction is overcome by the tendency of another layer to remain firm in that direction and to shrink in the opposite direction.

"Walnut furniture will never be valuable as a style for the reason that it represents a period of poor design. Walnut is in itself a beautiful wood, glowing in fine in grain, but the sort of

carving, piercing, carving and moulding to which it was subjected largely robbed it of its natural charm. Many pieces were too ponderous to be easily moved about. Simple designs in walnut similar to Colonial pieces would be beautiful and valuable, but even mahogany worked into ornate designs as was walnut would be artistically valueless. A few of the plain pieces of walnut are good in design and therefore permanent in worth."

For the golden oak furniture which was popular a few years ago and which is still to be seen in many of the houses of the reasonably well-to-do the College of Agriculture has nothing but the severest condemnation. To the false facility of the machine work the falling off in the beauty and dignity of the furniture of the golden oak period is attributed.

"Stamped decorations of poor pattern, machine carving glued to panels, scrollwork brackets and banded arms ending in animal heads—all these distortions have been applied to furniture in the name of decoration. But all in vain is the name, for decoration means enhancement. A chair or table of plain structure with straight edges has at least the dignity of being genuine. If the general form is to be softened or refined a human being, not a machine, must have the upper hand. The attempt to beautify must be an inspiration, not a nightmare," says the pamphlet.

"Oak as well as walnut has been greatly abused in the manufacture of furniture. Of all styles of furniture the golden oak or varnished natural oak of fifteen or twenty years ago was probably the tawdiest and most insincere ever manufactured."

OLD PAINTED TRAYS FOR MODERN DECORATIONS.

PURSUING the painted tray into one of the ways corners of the world is at present one of the diversions of women who are interested in antiques and who like to possess the very latest thing in the way of antiquities. Almost everybody remembers one or two of these trays as a family possession, looked upon with more or less doubtful admiration by the older members of the family, who vibrated between the point of view of their own earlier time, when such a tray was considered an admirable piece of household furniture, and that of the younger members of the family, who regarded it with ill-suppressed scorn, if not with open ridicule.

Now these trays are considered the most attractive addition possible to an afternoon tea outfit and are also placed on the dining room mantel shelf over the fireplace in rooms furnished in the English painted wood and the more simple oak and mahogany pieces. They are also used as decorations in living rooms which are furnished in the Colonial style.

It is now quite unusual to find these trays in the antique shops, although in some of the country neighborhoods, where the antique dealer prospects through the surrounding farm districts for his wares, some of the genuine old trays are now being brought in. Many of them are damaged, however, and it is necessary to employ persons skilled in this particular style of painting in order that they may be satisfactorily restored to their pristine beauty.

Very Attractive Designs.

In Cooper Union the art of painting these black trays ornamented in the antique style has been revived in the classes in decorative art, and several of the students have turned out trays copied from the old ones which are in the possession of the museum. Some of the trays have a decoration of a bouquet of flowers in the

dull blue or red, while the center part of the tray is left black. Other trays are decorated only in gold and look very much like the Chinese lacquer work, the designs being like those used on the lacquer. These trays are really very handsome. The designs of Pillement have also been copied on the trays by the students with great success.

To go with the trays, jardinières are made of the black lacquered ware decorated with designs corresponding to those on the trays. Book ends for tables and mantel shelves complete the set. All of these painted pieces are attractive in rooms in which painted furniture is used, and some persons use them with the black ground chintzes which have come into fashion recently. Not every one, however, finds the use of the hangings with black grounds satisfactory, as the cotton-like quality of the fabric shows more plainly and more disadvantageously than in those of lighter hues. The black background broadens which are used with lacquer have quite a different effect, as the quality of the material robs the black of the suggestion of dinginess which is apt to attach to the black cotton fabrics.

But whether used with the black background chintzes or not, the black trays and black jardinières look well together. Most of the pieces have the black grounds, but some are made with dark green ground and others are painted red before being decorated. All of these backgrounds are attractive for the quaint decoration, but the most universally liked is undoubtedly the black.

The trays, jardinières and book ends which are used for decorating are of the ordinary furniture and in the shapes to be found in any store where housewares are sold. The trays are usually oval and quite large, although the rectangular trays, especially those with irregular borders, are also used. The jardinières are

but only the larger of the two jars, which is to be the outer one, is decorated.

The decoration is put on opposite sides of the jar, usually in oval or round medallions and in colors, or only in gold, according to the decoration of the tray which the jardinière is to accompany.

On the book ends it is, of course, necessary to have a decoration which accords with the shape of the ends. Some of the best decorations show a design laid out something like an L, with one main point of the decoration at the top of one side of the L and the other at the other end of the L, the two figures being connected by a running design which borders the rack end on the lower edge. The motive of the design, of course, must be one that accords with this style of layout.



Furnishings for the Tea Table.

TO almost every woman the tea table is a matter of especial pride, and to have her tea table equipped with the most charming furnishings or with novel and amusing ones is one of the great ambitions of her domestic life. There are so many attractive articles for the tea table that it is indeed difficult to choose among them, and there are so many attractive styles of furnishing it that almost all women have pang of regret when they select one style only to find after several articles have been purchased that there are so many pretty things to be bought in quite a different style that will not at all accord with what they have already purchased.

For the Colonial tea table there is a wonderful old Revere silver. Of course, only the woman of great wealth can hope to obtain original pieces of this silver, but copies of it are made by modern silversmiths. The silver made by hand, with its wonderful color that no machine made pieces can attain, is the desire of all women who really are connoisseurs in the equipment of a tea table.

Then there is the Colonial china in its many quaint designs and adorable shapes, all of it expensive, but so delightful that it is well worth the investment. The glass for such a tea table should be the fine old cut glass, just a little cut, not heavy and glaring like the modern pieces.

If one wants to have a tea table in the English style there is some new china in the old Chelsea pattern, white with black bands, on which there are rose garland decorations. This china harmonizes with the painted furniture and the black ground chintzes and broadens that are now as

fashionable. With the Sheffield plate pieces are in perfect accord.

And the Dresden tea table, with its quaint little pieces so full of color, so charming in design! And the silver—wonderful little hand made pieces, delicately carved and brought over a few at a time, perhaps as the souvenirs of happy summers spent in European travel.

But of course it isn't necessary that the tea table should be so very expensive as all this. It is the color effect that counts largely, and this can be obtained by other than the most beautiful quality of china, and the most idyllic of hand made silver; it can be done, but of course there must be some originality to make up for the lack of perfection.

There is copper with blue and white, for instance, that is not to be despised as a combination for the tea table. The copper may be in the little hot water kettle and perhaps in the sugar bowl and cream jug. There are very attractive sets of this sort. The silver made by hand, with its wonderful color that no machine made pieces can attain, is the desire of all women who really are connoisseurs in the equipment of a tea table.

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